



Wellbeing in the Workplace: Trend or fad?

RO Real Estate round table with guests

Southampton

9 May 2019



Attendees

The chair and scribe for the discussion was **Helen Parton**:

Helen is an architecture and interiors journalist with over 15 years' experience. Helen specialises in writing about how well-designed workspaces can make people happier and more productive. She edited workplace design magazine [OnOffice](#) for three years from 2015 - 2018, winning one [International Building Press](#) (IBP) Award, with the magazine picking up four [PPA](#) nominations and two nominations in the [British Society of Magazine Editors](#) awards (BSMEs) in that time, including being in the running for Trade & Professional Editor of the Year in 2017. She has also co-authored a book by Thames and Hudson called '[Total Office Design](#)'. She is currently a freelance editorial consultant, writing for magazines such as [Blueprint](#), [OnOffice](#), [Property Week](#) and (chartered surveyors title) [Modus](#).

Participants of the roundtable include:

### **Carol Phillips**

Carol is a commercial property lawyer and a partner with [Foot Anstey](#) based in the Southampton office.

Carol has worked in the sector for twenty years, starting her career with [Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer](#) in London, followed by over a decade at Olswang (now part of [CMS](#)). Carol also had a period in house with [Virgin Media](#) as sole real estate counsel providing support to the company on all of its real estate including occupational, retail and technical property and advising the company on the law as it affects the expansion of telecommunications networks.

Carol has been with Foot Anstey since 2017 and supports a variety of clients with the real estate issues affecting their businesses. Carol acts for clients including [B&Q](#), [Screwfix](#) and [Direct Wines](#) in relation to their operational, retail and distribution spaces.

Work highlights include supporting a number of clients through HQ moves, leading the asset management team at her previous firm providing support to a number of significant property funds and acting for a fund client on the sale (by vacant possession) of a large city centre shopping centre in Birmingham to [Primark](#), which was recently launched as the retailer's largest single store.

### Emma Meredith

Emma is a chartered surveyor with over 15 years' experience in town centre development in the private and public sector. Emma is currently the regeneration and development manager at [Hampshire County Council](#). In her current role she assists public and private partners to deliver their development aspirations and matches commercial opportunities - built space and developments, to occupiers and investors. Before joining Hampshire, Emma was a development manager at [Southampton City Council](#) project managing the delivery of a portfolio of mixed use developments in the City Centre.

Emma started her career in the private sector working in development consultancy teams at Donaldsons, then DTZ (now [Cushman & Wakefield](#)) advising a range of clients on development feasibility, scheme formulation, marketing and delivery as well as developing town centre strategies.

### Gary Helm

As the founder of [obo](#), Gary's focus is on the physical and emotional wellbeing of people in the workplace, through delivering solutions that fully support the human, organisational and facilities needs of organisations.

Through close collaboration with a coalition of experts across the supply chain, he is focused on creating workplaces that allow talent to flourish and for company cultures to be reflected. Gary has been on the advisory board of the [Mad World Summit](#) since its inception. This forum addresses the increasing need to address mental health as part of the wellbeing programme and encourages a proactive approach to caring for the body and mind that benefits everyone. It not only makes sense on a human level – but poor mental health ultimately costs employers billions in productivity and related expenses.

### Gary Wilburn MSc / BA (Hons) MCSD

Gary is a director of [HPW Architecture Ltd](#), based in Hampshire, as well as the chair of the [AECB](#), board member of [Future South](#) and Steering Group and founder member of [Green Halo](#).

Founded in 1986 HPW is a multi-disciplined architecture, interior design and branding studio specialising in sustainable and resilient solutions. Working on projects ranging from £100k to £100 million in the retail, leisure, residential and commercial sectors, Gary and his team aim to minimise impact and energy use in the construction and whole life operation of the buildings they design.

Having a passion to deliver low energy solutions to his clients for many years, Gary went back to University in 2008 and gained an MSc in Sustainable Building: Performance and Design at Oxford Brookes. Focusing on Building Physics, POE, Bioregional material sourcing and Dynamic Thermal Modeling, his study and research now informs the holistic, integrated and independent approach adopted by the design and technical teams at HPW.

Gary has a very active involvement with the construction industry and sustainably focused organisations throughout the UK.

### **Georgia Elliott-Smith**

Georgia is director of sustainability and wellbeing consultancy Element 4. Georgia is a passionate advocate for sustainability and wellbeing in the property and construction industry. A sustainability consultant for 20+ years, Georgia works with organisations to improve environmental and social impacts, delivering significant financial and reputational benefits.

A [WELL Accredited](#) professional and [Fitwel](#) ambassador, Georgia is at the vanguard of the WELL Building movement, designing occupant wellbeing into real estate.

Georgia worked with RO Real Estate to obtain the first Fitwel certifications in Europe for its [Dakota Weybridge](#) and [One Dorset Street](#) developments.

### **Lynn Murphy**

Lynn works as the workplace wellbeing coordinator for the Southampton City Council [Wellbeing@Work](#) service to businesses in the city.

Her professional background and experience is as a developer of people and businesses working as a coach, facilitator, trainer and consultant, and includes focused work on flexible working and work-life balance. In recent years Lynn has been drawn to exploring mindfulness and mindful self-compassion in a bid to balance 21<sup>st</sup> century busyness by preserving the experience and potential of being human.

Part of the city growth team, Wellbeing@Work supports local businesses to be proactive and strategic in investing in the health & wellbeing of their staff.

### **Nella Pang**

Nella is a director in the Southampton office of [JLL](#) and is responsible for the business space and development team across the South Coast region, whilst also working closely with the Bristol and London Capital Market teams. Nella has fifteen years' experience in commercial agency and advises on several key occupiers, developers, and investors across the region. She has commercial surveying experience in the following areas: negotiations, managing client relationships, project management, leasing, letting, purchase and sales.

Nella is responsible for setting business line objectives and targets for the team and plays an integral part to the Southampton office to promote cross selling and business generation throughout the Southern regional offices. Nella is involved in the wider Southampton office business development meetings, working on strategies to best increase the profile on a local and national presence.

### **Nick Moore**

Nick is head of investment at [RO Real Estate](#). Nick is a dedicated and results driven senior manager with over 20 years' experience in the commercial real estate industry. He has excellent breadth of expertise including agency, asset management, fund management and more recently distressed real estate. Nick possesses an in-depth understanding of the UK real estate market, encompassing a wide geography and all asset classes.

RO Real Estate is a wholly owned subsidiary of the [RO](#) and has an established track record of maximising value through active asset management, refurbishment and development.

RO Real Estate invests in all commercial property sectors and has significant experience working with joint venture partners and managing assets on behalf of third parties. RO Real

Estate has a strong balance sheet and a long-established reputation for conducting business diligently, thoroughly and efficiently.

### **Stuart McLennan**

Stuart has been a director at [LAH Property Marketing](#) for five and half years, helping to develop and grow the business whilst managing the associated structural changes that come with running a burgeoning 'people-business'. For the preceding nine years he worked in international advertising sales at [The Wall Street Journal](#), [The Economist](#) and latterly [BBC World News](#) where he managed sales and operations in Europe, Africa and Central Asia. The first seven years of his working life were spent at the UK merchant bank [Close Brothers](#). For over 30 years, LAH Property Marketing have provided property-savvy front-of-house reception teams, on-site marketing support and tenant engagement programmes for commercial property nationwide.

## Content

### Developing wellness in the workplace

**RO Real Estate gathers a panel of industry experts to discuss wellness and wellbeing, one of the hottest topics in the world of developing, designing and managing offices right now**

*“Wellbeing is clearly a lot of different things to different people but we all have a responsibility for it,”* begins Nick Moore, RO Real Estate’s head of investment. Undoubtedly, statistics like UK employers losing an average of 35.6 days of productive time per person per year back up the need to carefully consider wellness at work. Among the assembled group were representatives from a variety of organisations with different sets of considerations, including property lawyer Carol Phillips, partner at Foot Anstey. She says that the legal profession has its own challenges. *“We expect a lot from people and it’s about how do you keep teams of people motivated, especially when we have offices in places from Southampton to Truro: how do you make sure everyone is happy and engaged?”* Meanwhile Stuart McLennan swapped nearly a decade in the corporate world of advertising sales to join his wife in the business she was growing, LAH Property Marketing. This firm provides front-of-house reception teams, marketing support and tenant engagement programmes and in becoming a director, McLennan not only brought some big business thinking to the company, but also improved his work/life balance into the bargain.

Opening up the discussion outside of the private sector, Lynn Murphy, workplace wellbeing adviser for Southampton City Council points to a useful definition cited in a recent British Safety Council gathering of wellbeing experts - Hugh Robertson offered *“a sense of contentment, a sense of connection with people’s work: a usefulness, a purpose and dignity,”* adding that in her role, *“We help businesses be aware of and develop and embed health and wellbeing for their workforce. The conversation has gone beyond going to the gym or cycling into work and is about how people feel about where they work, and can they give their best selves?”* Emma Meredith, regeneration and development manager at Hampshire County Council added that wellness is very high up the agenda at her place of work too, *“It has invested significant money in IT so that we can work remotely, and in support and training and I think traditionally the public sector is seen as more flexible.”*

While much has been made of the war for talent and attracting and retaining the brightest millennials entering the workforce, the panel recognised the wellness needs of different demographics, be that part time or homeworking for parents with young children or a physical environment that better suits older workers in terms of lighting levels and access. While apps are a modern-day way to achieve buy-in to wellness programmes for some, the panel agreed that old-fashioned posters in a lift or a physical noticeboard can do just as much to communicate better and more frequently to a wider range of employees. Georgia Elliott-Smith, director of sustainability and wellness strategists Element 4 Group also points out that 15% of people take up traditional workplace wellbeing schemes like cycle-to-work and discounted gym memberships. The remaining 85% do not engage with these schemes at all. By designing a building to improve indoor environmental quality and physical activity during normal daily working activities 100% of building occupants are therefore positively impacted.

As for whose responsibility it is to embed wellness in the supply chain process Gary Wilburn, managing director of HPW architects puts in an impassioned plea, “We have to get wellness up the agenda, so it's embedded in the design process,” adding that, “*We've got to change legislation in a massive way in order for more people to put wellness at the top of the priority list.*” Nick Moore cautions against this, putting forward the case for promoting wellness in another way, “*Rather than a legislative route, would we not be better to encourage best practice through our actions? From an RO perspective, we're creating examples through Fitwel accreditation and attracting the tenants, which will monetise the solution and prove the product to the rest of the industry.*” And Nella Pang, JLL's head of business space and development for the South Coast says potential corporate tenants are already seeing the value of wellness, adding, “*It's featuring very high on their agenda when they're looking for new space as it's about meeting corporate social responsibilities.*”

Georgia Elliott-Smith, who worked on Fitwel accreditation for two buildings in the RO portfolio: Dakota in Weybridge and the recently opened One Dorset Street in Southampton adds, “*For me it's the earlier the engagement the better. If you can incorporate wellness principles from the very beginning then it is also less likely to cost as much money. Standards such as WELL and Fitwel are not on their own silver bullets but they are a really positive move around this idea of how we treat people at work. I think for landlords and for investors, it's about offering a space that has been designed around being healthy, so great lighting, good acoustics, great views and clean air and ergonomic fittings and furniture. You are providing the environment for people to flourish in, rather than expecting them to flourish despite the environment.*”

And it's not just encouraging employers and employees to think about people's physical care says Moore, “*Mental health is so important and to now not have a stigma attached to taking time off for mental health shows how far we've come.*” Gary Helm adds that part of the remit of obo, the business he founded which looks at the physical and emotional wellbeing of people in the workplace is about “*trying to work around businesses and understand the human condition as well as the operational needs and facilities.*” Being on the advisory board for Mad World, a forum for mental health as part of wellbeing, has informed his take on the matter further, “*I think it's really the beginning of understanding it's OK not to be OK and also to create an environment at work for this. A wellbeing room might, a few years ago, be for somebody with a headache or a new mother but now those sorts of spaces are for everybody. A lot of businesses are now introducing quiet or recluse spaces as well as more mentoring, coaching and counselling.*”

Ultimately wellness is a work in progress - a case in point being the Dakota building, which already has the first FitWel certification for a multi-tenanted building in Europe. There RO is still making improvements: to the amenity areas and break out spaces because as Moore puts in finally, “*We have a duty to create built environments that gives people the opportunity to get the best out of their own wellbeing.*”